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John Birch Society

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THE MAN BEHIND THE

JOHN
BIRCH
SOCIETY

WHAT HE SAYS AND HOW
HE OPERATES. TURN THE
PAGE FOR THE STORY
OF THE MAN WHO BELIEVES
"DEMOCRACY IS...A FRAUD."

By CHESTER MORRISON LOOK SENIOR EDITOR

CAPT. JOHN BIRCH, U.S.A., OSS, is dead. He died nobly perhaps, but senselessly, as is often the lot of soldiers. He was brutally murdered in a useless argument with a posse of Chinese Communist guerrillas in China ten days after the war had ended in 1945. His name has now been brought into the headlines by Robert Welch, founder of the John Birch Society.

A few years back, Welch retired from the family candy business in Belmont, a suburb of Boston, to spend the rest of his allotted time and money stamping out the Communist menace. He believes that the menace exists, not because of Russia's military power, but because of the presence of traitors in our midst. After retiring, he wrote a book in which he said: "My firm belief that Dwight Eisenhower is a dedicated, conscious agent of the Communist conspiracy is based on an accumulation of detailed evidence so extensive and so palpable that it seems to me to put this conviction beyond any reasonable doubt."

He had second thoughts

Welch partially withdrew that accusation, when it was brought to light, by denying that he ever had called Eisenhower a "card-carrying Communist." And besides, he protested, his book was a private letter sent to a number of his acquaintances, and nobody had the right to put it in the papers.

Welch has made other statements, for example: "Democracy is merely a deceptive phrase, a weapon of demagoguery and a perennial fraud."

"The total Communist influence over our national activities is a minimum of 40 per cent of total control."

"Some [Protestant ministers] actually use their pulpits to preach outright communism."

He made veiled references to President Kennedy as being "an amoral man who can do a tremendous amount of ball-carrying on behalf of communism here in the United States."

Franklin D. Roosevelt and Gen. George C. Marshall were guilty of "plain unadulterated treason."

"I think Nelson Rockefeller is definitely committed to trying to make the United States a part of a one-world Socialist government."

Chief Justice Earl Warren should be impeached because "he has taken the lead in . . . converting this republic into a democracy. . . ."

Most of these quotes are from *The Blue Book*, which Welch published in 1959 as the ground plan for the salvation of the United States and as the guide for members of the John Birch Society. It is one of hundreds of his publications. Welch is a prolific pamphleteer. He travels constantly about the country, lecturing for his cause. He has established chapters of his society in most of the 50 states.

It is a semisecret society. It has published its Committee of Endorsers, but does not disclose the names of its members, except for those of members of the Council, which is the governing board. The society makes vague claims that it has 100,000 members now and expects one million in the next couple of years.

Its spokesmen are reluctant to talk about the society's money—where it comes from and how it is spent. The annual dues are \$24 for men, \$12 for women, payable in monthly installments. A life membership costs \$1,000. Each month, Welch sends a bulletin of advice and guidance to all members. With it, he encloses an envelope, into which a generous member may seal an additional contribution for forwarding by his local chapter leader to the home office at Belmont. He has acknowledged that there are substantial gifts from other sources. On the basis of 100,000 dues-paying members, half of them men at \$24 and the other half women at \$12, the society is a \$1,800,000-a-year business.

Welch says there is an annual audit of the society's books; that the society is chartered as a non-profit educational corporation; that his traveling expenses are paid by local chapters who invite him to lecture, and that he collects no pay himself. A large part of the society's income goes for its numerous publications, including a monthly pocket-sized magazine called *American Opinion*.

The John Birch Society may not be Fascist, but it has some of the trappings of fascism. It may not be cousin to the Ku Klux Klan, but its secrecy arouses suspicion. It certainly is not Communist, but it has no compunction about adapting to its own purposes the devious propaganda methods of the Soviet Union.

By Welch's description, in *The Blue Book*, the John Birch Society is a "monolithic" organization directed by his own "dynamic personal leadership." To make his meaning unmistakable, he declared at the first organization meeting: "It is not that you

would choose me [as your leader] or that I would even choose me, against other possibilities. It is simply that, under the pressure of time and the exigencies of our need, you have no choice. . . ."

Welch explains in his rule book that those who join the society will do so "primarily because they believe in me and what I am doing and are willing to accept my leadership anyway. . . . Whenever, either through infiltration by the enemy or honest differences of opinion, that loyalty ceases . . . the member can either resign or will be put out. . . . We are not going to have factions developing on the two-sides-to-every-question theme."

The Founder—that is Welch's title in the John Birch hierarchy—defines his philosophy and lays down his program explicitly in *The Blue Book*:

"If I were the 'man on the white horse' on our side in this war [against the Communist conspiracy] which is still political and educational rather than military; if I had sufficient resources available and sufficiently accepted authority over one million dedicated supporters—out of at least five times that many militant anti-Communists who are already enrolled in, or contributing to, hundreds of ineffectual 'freedom' groups—so that I could co-ordinate the activities of those million men and women with some degree of positiveness and efficiency . . . if I had this kind of realistic force . . . here are some of the things I would do."

War on the book front

Then Welch lays down the order of battle:

"First we would establish reading rooms, small and inexpensive, in as many of the cities, towns, and villages of this country as we could, just as rapidly as we could. They would be manned . . . by local members of our organization. . . . They would be extremely selective as to the books available."

This preliminary maneuver has now been well launched. Across the country, there are reading rooms and bookshops where published Birch material is available (*The Blue Book* costs \$2) and where 100 books approved by the society are for sale. These 100 books alone, Welch said, will constitute a complete education for any good American who really wants to know the true history of events and developments of the past two decades. The approved publications include the *National Review*, a conserva-

This is part of the audience that heard Robert Welch in a lecture at Wichita, Kans. After his two-hour talk, many people said it was fine.



"These tactics are mean and dirty, but the Communists are meaner and dirtier, and too slippery for you to put your fingers on them...no matter how much they look like prosperous members of the local Rotary Club."

tive periodical aimed at teachers; the *Dan Sinoat Report*, a conservative propaganda organ; *Human Events* and *American Opinion*, the official Birch monthly magazine. Welch hopes eventually to put this reading matter into every doctor's office, every dentist's waiting room and every barbershop in this country and abroad.

"We would," says *The Blue Book*, "do everything we could to support, maintain, increase the number of stations used, and widen the audiences of, such radio programs as those of Fulton Lewis, Clarence Manion [both ultraconservative commentators] and of Hubert Kregeloh in Springfield, Mass., a solidly conservative...analyst of the news."

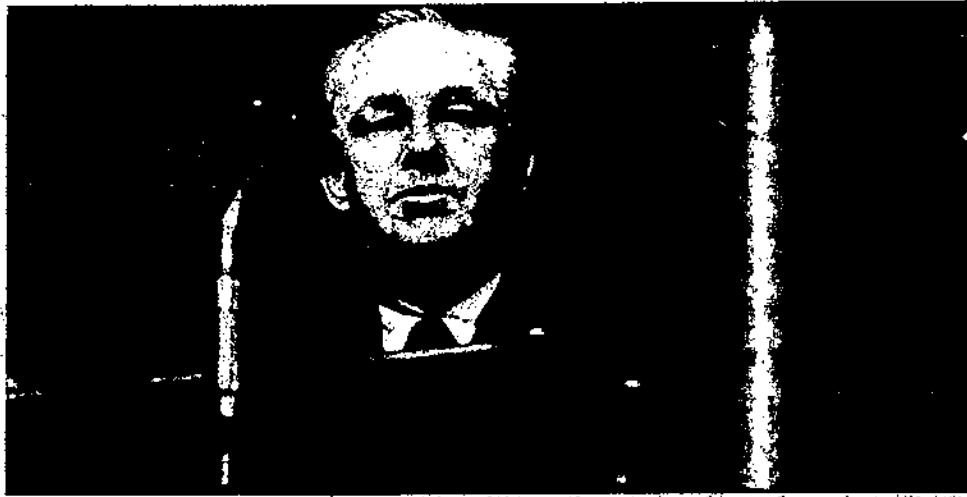
Welch explains that encouragement for such programs would be expressed by purchase of the sponsors' products.

"We would institute," as another integral phase of the Birch program, "organized planning and control to make full and effective use of the powerful letter-writing weapon. The Communists boast that they can now land 50,000 individually written letters in Washington, on either side of any subject, within 72 hours. We could make it look like peanuts, with a million dedicated and controlled supporters...."

The letter-writing campaign is in full swing—letters to politicians, national and local; to newspapers; to the parents of students, pointing out schools, colleges and teachers who do not conform to the Birch line; letters to radio and TV sponsors whose programs displease Birchers. Welch relates how letters from ultraconservatives convinced a transcontinental airline that it had better abandon a plan to paint on its planes the insignia of the United Nations, with the legend "We Believe."

Robert Welch announces in *The Blue Book* his intention to operate behind "front" organizations, with which the Birch Society need not acknowledge any connection. He further admits that the device of asking embarrassing questions is a successful Communist tactic and that this and other tactics to be executed by the Birch Society are "mean and dirty, but the Communists are meaner and dirtier, and too slippery for you to put your fingers on them in the ordinary way—no matter how much they look like prosperous members of the local Rotary Club."

As random thoughts, Welch suggests such fronts



Welch: "Next to a woman scorned, hell hath no fury like a liberal about whom somebody has told the truth?"

as: a Petition to Impeach Earl Warren and a Committee to Investigate Communist Influences at Vassar College, "headed by Vassar graduates, of course."

Welch wants to expose "the head of one of the great educational institutions in the East whom at least some of us believe to be a Communist," but he says that obtaining proof against the man would be too expensive for the Birch Society. If he had only \$5,000, he "could get all the material needed for quite a shock," he says. Then he would publish in *American Opinion* a set of questions for the man to answer.

"Of course," Welch says in *The Blue Book*, "we would be smeared by the liberals...for next to a woman scorned, hell hath no fury like that of a liberal about whom somebody has told the truth. But smearing we would have to expect anyway."

Welch proposes lining up a large list of speakers, huge lists of church clubs, PTA. groups and other organizations that would listen to his speakers for small fees, or none at all. "It's another game at which we should beat the Communists hands down."

This operation is now in progress all over the

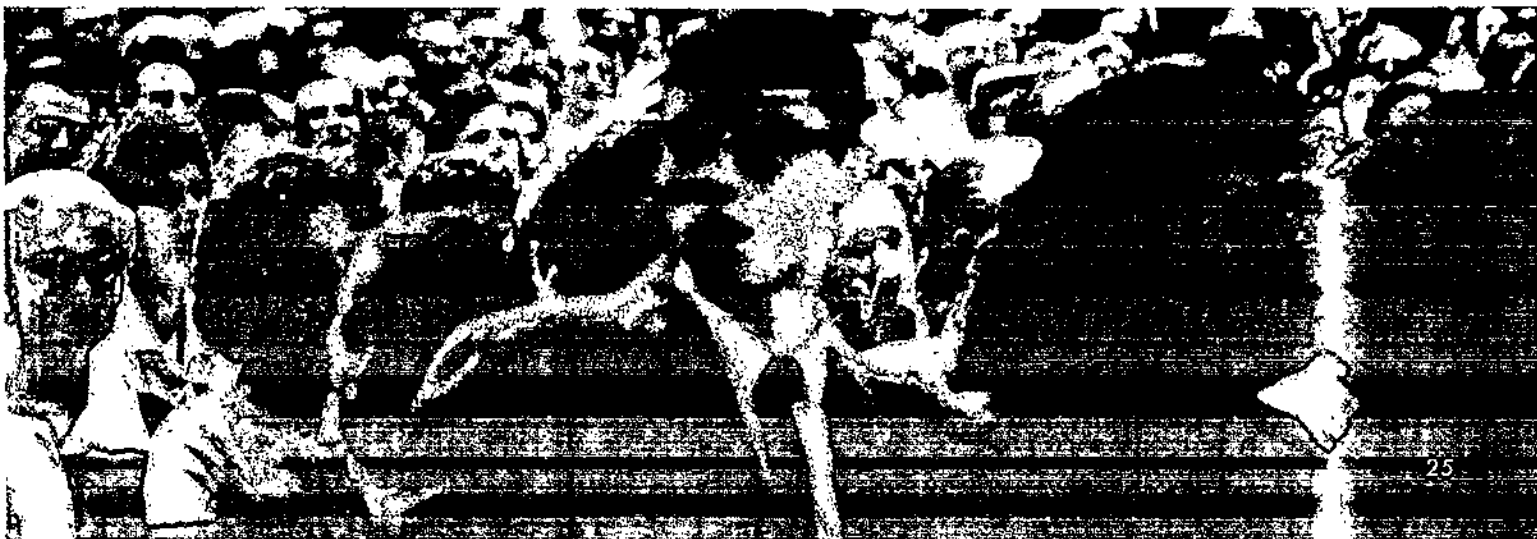
country. One of the more recent announcements of the Birch Society called upon all its members to compile "the most complete and most accurate files in America on the leading Comsymps [the Welch label for Communist sympathizers], Socialists and liberals..." with "the background connections and activities of all the leading liberals."

The announcement came after the event. For some time, there has been such an effort by Birchers in college communities, including the University of Texas in Austin. There, the tally sheet calls for information on the faculty, on courses and textbooks and on the campus newspaper.

Welch believes in branching out abroad as well as at home. He says in *The Blue Book*:

"For many reasons we would start extending our body to other countries, as soon as there were energy and resources to be spared for that purpose." And then: "Most important of all, we would put our weight into the political scales in this country just as fast and as far as we could. Unless we can eventually reverse by political action the gradual surrender of the United States to communism, the ultimate

continued



"George Catlett Marshall has been a conscious, deliberate, dedicated agent of the Soviet conspiracy.... For many reasons and after a lot of study, I personally believe [John Foster] Dulles to be a Communist agent."

alternative of reversal by military uprising is fearful to contemplate."

In his writings, Welch drops numerous hints about the possibility of an uprising by his "1,000,000" dedicated supporters.

There have been pieces in the newspapers about the concern of the Pentagon when The Brass sounds off on dangers to the Republic. There have been high-level directives shutting off some of the more vociferous military speechmakers. There have been Congressional inquiries into the contents of some of the "indoctrination manuals" used by the armed services for instruction of the young recruit.

One incident concerned Gen. Edwin A. Walker, commander of an infantry division in Germany. General Walker was reported to have circulated among his men propaganda similar to that which the Birch Society circulates. He was removed from his command and assigned to headquarters in Heidelberg. He flatly denied that he is a Bircher.

In organized politics, the Birch Society has a few obscure Congressmen who are acknowledged society members—Edgar W. Hiestand, James B. Utt and John H. Rousselot, all of California—and possibly some others who have not stood up to be counted. In local communities, the society has the active support of influential men who can throw a great deal of weight around. In the South and the Middle West, where special regional concerns are important, the society prospers. And young people everywhere—unsure, inexperienced, untaught—are targets for the Welch line.

He parrots The Blue Book

In Los Angeles, the man to see about the Birch Society is Paul H. (Tex) Talbert, a successful insurance agent. This reporter came to see Tex Talbert, and we argued some and he hollered "Smear!" But we parted on a reasonably friendly basis, and Tex arranged for me to talk to some of the people who are Birchers or Bircher candidates in Los Angeles. We gathered (without Tex Talbert) and talked for three hours. There were seven of them, aged 18 to 30, including a college girl who would have been ostracized by earlier but similar Birchlike movements because she believes women have rights.

These were young deep-thinkers, but it is an odd experience to listen to an 18-year-old high-school boy explaining why the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States should be impeached, especially when his argument comes from Birch Society publications.

That long and interesting conversation with the young folks was taped. But the tape was delivered to Tex Talbert, who would not release it to anybody not a true believer in *The Blue Book*.

The Blue Book is a transcript of some talks Welch made at Indianapolis in 1958. He had invited 11 men to meet him there—all well-heeled men of affairs—and he talked to them for two solid days. *The Blue Book* was his second major propaganda effort. The first, often called *The Black Book*, is a diatribe officially titled *The Politician*. The politician of the title is Dwight D. Eisenhower, "the most completely opportunistic and unprincipled politician America has ever raised to high office...."

That description of Eisenhower occurs in Welch's foreword to *The Politician*. In the body of the book, he is specific about what he has thought of Eisenhower and of other prominent figures of recent years:

"Eisenhower... is demonstrably one of the most

insincere, vindictive and hypocritical human beings that ever lived...."

"Whereas Harry Truman was usually too dumb to realize the purpose for which his name and authority were being used, however Eisenhower has personally played too clever a hand in the Communist game, too long, in so many different sets of circumstances, for any such assumption even to be reasonable...."

"Eisenhower is the only man, Russian or American, or of any other nation, who was ever allowed to have his picture taken with Stalin (just the two of them together) at the tomb of Lenin...."

"It should be no surprise to anybody that Eisenhower was raised with this mentality of fanaticism, for as recently as 1942 his mother was arrested for participating in a forbidden parade of Jehovah's Witnesses...."

"In my own firm opinion, the Communists have one of their own actually in the Presidency. For Eisenhower there is only one possible word to describe his purposes and actions. That word is treason...."

"Eisenhower's betrayal to the Communists of his own country, and of the free world it was supposed to be leading, has been so determined, so steady and so effective that his purpose seems to me unmistakable...."

"In my opinion, the chances are very strong that Milton Eisenhower is actually Dwight Eisenhower's superior and boss within the Communist party...."

"I defy anybody who is not actually a Communist to read all of the known facts about his career and not decide that since at least sometime in the 1930's George Catlett Marshall has been a conscious, deliberate, dedicated agent of the Soviet conspiracy...."

"For many reasons and after a lot of study, I personally believe [John Foster] Dulles to be a Communist agent...."

The attack on Conant and Warren

"We do not contend that [James B.] Conant is a Communist. We do contend that the appointment [of Conant as High Commissioner to Germany] was made by a Communist President for the specific purpose of damaging the Republican party and the anti-Communist cause...."

"[Earl] Warren is probably not a Communist, although the ardent advocacy of him for the Presidency by Eleanor Roosevelt and many of her ilk makes one wonder...."

"The pro-Communist leanings [of Supreme Court Justice William Joseph Brennan] were so clearly established in his record that he could not possibly have been confirmed before the smooth Eisenhower-Communist machine had worn down, browbeaten and completely demoralized so much of the anti-Communist strength...."

The Politician also reflects Welch's thoughts on civil rights. It says at one point:

"This writer, in an article published two years ago, pointed out that the whole 'civil rights' program in America was just as phony as the 'agrarian reform' program of the Communists in China twenty years ago...."

Each of the 11 men who attended Welch's meeting at Indianapolis in 1958, when the John Birch Society was founded, was given a copy of *The Politician*. All of them were rich men, most of them first-generation rich, all determined to protect what

they had acquired for themselves in the free-enterprise way. They read *The Politician*, and they told Welch it would not do.

Robert Welch is no fool. He needed the help of those men in his crusade. *The Politician* was withdrawn from circulation. It is all but impossible now to lay hands on a copy. It is not registered with the Library of Congress, because it was privately printed and privately circulated by Welch.

Spokesmen for the John Birch Society insist that *The Politician* antedated the formation of the society by several years. They say it has nothing to do with the society. Yet portions of *The Politician* are embedded in *The Blue Book*.

A good place to watch the Birchers at work is Wichita, Kans. This "typical" U.S. town is used by the Birchers, as by organizers of advertising campaigns, as a "pilot" town, a place to try out ideas.

The Birch Society leaders in Wichita are, beginning from the top, Fred Koch, president of the Rock Island Oil & Refining Company, a charter member of the society and a member of its governing council; Robert Love, president of the Love Box Co.; Kenneth Myers and Leonard (Yank) Banowitz, a pair of lawyers who spend much of their time lecturing to groups of young people on the society's aims and principles.

Teachers are harassed

At Wichita University, a municipal college, a group of teachers described the harassments of the faculty by Birchers. There is interference with teaching methods, they said; there are supervision and censorship of the college library; there are classroom spies who report to the Birch Society any deviations by a teacher from the Birch line. Two members of that group left for other schools at the end of the past semester.

Welch came into Wichita recently to deliver his standard lecture, much of which is straight out of *The Blue Book*. He addressed an audience of nearly 2,000, who packed an auditorium on the Wichita University campus. He is a small sparrow of a man, white-haired, stoop-shouldered and tired out. He speaks in the accent of New England.

He explained the "principle of reversal." When the Communists condemn something, they have in mind the precise opposite. They speak against things and people, with the purpose of deceiving free people into thinking that Communists are against these things and people, so that free people should support the things and people the Communists really support. It went on like that.

The purpose of the Kremlin's condemnation of the late Russian author Boris Pasternak was to get *Dr. Zhivago* published in America. That is in a characteristically involved passage of *The Blue Book*: "Already, through their stooges like [Yugoslav's] Milovan Djilas, and Boris Pasternak, who is 'supposed' to be suffering the bitter enmity of the dictators in Russia, but whose books have thus been publicized to become best sellers in America; already through such books which gullible Americans more readily swallow as true because of the supposed hatred of the authors for their respective governments, tens of thousands of opinion-molding Americans are more and more accepting the thesis of these books that Communism is all right in itself, and that all that's wrong with it is the people now running the system."

He said that the large foundations have been

secretly but visibly working for years under a directive, "so to change the economic and political structure of the United States that it can be comfortably merged with Soviet Russia."

He said: "The Protestant ministry is more heavily infiltrated by Communists than any other profession in America. There are 7,000 Comsymps in Protestant pulpits."

He said: "During the past 15 years, our government has played a leading part in all the deceptive procedures for handing over one nation after another to the Communist tyranny."

Welch had come on stage in the hot Wichita auditorium, and Fred Koch had introduced him. "Welch quit the Naval Academy after two years," said Koch, "because he didn't want to be a sailor. He quit Harvard because of Felix Frankfurter."

While this was going on, a man from Wichita's local TV station had set up his camera and was testing his lights. Welch moved to the microphone. He shielded his eyes with his arm. He asked what all those lights were for. A black-browed man stormed down the aisle and demanded that the TV operator take his stuff out of there. "Who are you?" said the TV man. "I'm Bob Love," the other man said. "You were told you couldn't make pictures. Get out."

The TV man packed up and left. But the sound track was running all that time. That night, the Wichita station ran the dialogue. The commentator said, "They say they're teaching anti-Communism, but they sure are teaching it in secret."

An abrupt change in plans

This reporter handed his card across the footlights, with a message written on the back asking whether Welch would speak to him briefly when the meeting was over. Welch had precluded his long talk with a promise of a question-and-answer session at the end of the festivities. Koch received the card with a bland smile, read the message, started back to show it to Welch, turned the card over, saw the reporter's identity, stopped dead in his tracks, then moved on to Welch. Welch read the card, went back to his microphone and announced that there would be no question-and-answer period that night.

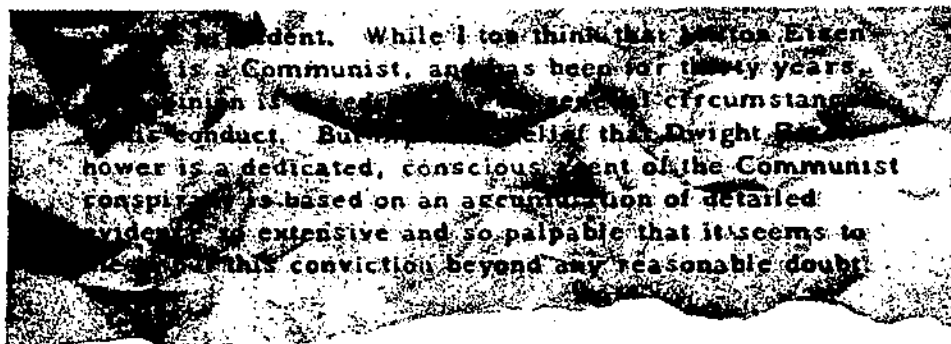
Under the tall, dark campus elms, across the soft, dewy grass, the audience chatted its way toward the parking lot and home. I asked a dozen of them—young and not-so-young, men and women—how did they like the speech? Every single one of them said, in substance, "Jes' fine, jes' fine."

But later that night, an intelligent 17-year-old Wichita high-school girl, having a snack at the Pan-vake Palace of the Hotel Allis, said she had heard most of the lecture before. Out of curiosity, she had attended one of Yank Banowitz's youth classes. She never went back again. She thought it was silly.

The next morning, in the Wichita Eagle-Beacon, there was an editorial:

"The man who invented the roller coaster knew something basic about human nature; people love to be scared to death. That forgotten inventor-philosopher is the spiritual ancestor of Robert Welch. . . . Throughout two hours of a speech that should have made a man with a toothache laugh, there was not a smile in sight—only rows of upturned faces drinking in The Word. . . . From what we have seen, we have to conclude that Welch is selling snake oil, and that a lot of people are buying it."

In some other towns, both the press and the pulpit have gone after the Birchers, with some effect.



In Santa Barbara, Calif., home of retired rich men and retired admirals, the News Press viewed the progress of the society there with no alarm until its publisher, T. M. Storke, heard about Welch's book, *The Politician*, in which his friend Dwight Eisenhower is maligned. Storke wrote a flaming page-one editorial excoriating the Birch Society, and the society branch in Santa Barbara—headed by Dr. Granville Knight, an allergist—is now less vociferous.

Welch, in *The Blue Book*, directs that the Birch Society should operate behind fronts. There is no way for an outsider to identify any of these fronts, and certainly there is no palpable connection between the John Birch Society and the National Economic Council, Inc., except that Wichita-lawyer Myers's bag of Birch propaganda included an April, 1961, letter from the Economic Council. Myers had marked in that letter, for my attention, an essay in praise of the Birch Society. He did not mark another item in the letter. The Birch Society avows that it is not anti-Semitic. The Economic Council letter says:

"If there were six million Jews within reach of Hitler, which number is widely questioned, and if they have all disappeared, where are they? . . . Is it not likely that many of these six million, claimed to have been killed . . . are right here in the United States and are now joining in the agitation for more and more support for the State of Israel—even if the American Republic goes down?"

In a 1960 bulletin to members, Welch wrote: ". . . We stressed the importance of getting ever wider readership for publications that oppose socialism or communism and support the American free-enterprise system. . . . We omitted one of the best-informed and most outspoken. . . . It is the Economic Council Letter . . . a compact source of penetrating information . . . presented with complete accuracy. . . ."

In Houston, Texas, where the society's membership is estimated at 5,000, one of its most vigorous opponents is Rabbi Robert I. Kahn. He said in a sermon recently that, to Robert Welch, "the whole world is full of conspiracy; everybody's hand is raised against him. This is revealed not only in the wild-eyed radical accusations he makes (and believes), but in little ways as well."

"This is the man who, in Amarillo, when the audience began to cough a little . . . interrupted his reading to accuse them of heckling him. 'I know these tricks,' he said. . . . And more than once he has referred to the possibility of his being assassinated, a martyr to the cause. . . . There is no arguing with him. His are no longer ideas; they are frantic fears. His is no drive for an ideal, but a poorly concealed bid for personal power. . . ."

An excerpt from *The Politician*, written by Welch—a 302-page book he calls a personal letter sent to a few acquaintances. The book is not on file in the Congressional Library, and copies are closely protected.



Fred Koch, Wichita oil engineer, was chairman of the meeting when Welch spoke.



Paul (Tex) Talbert is a Los Angeles insurance agent and organizer for the John Birch Society.

END